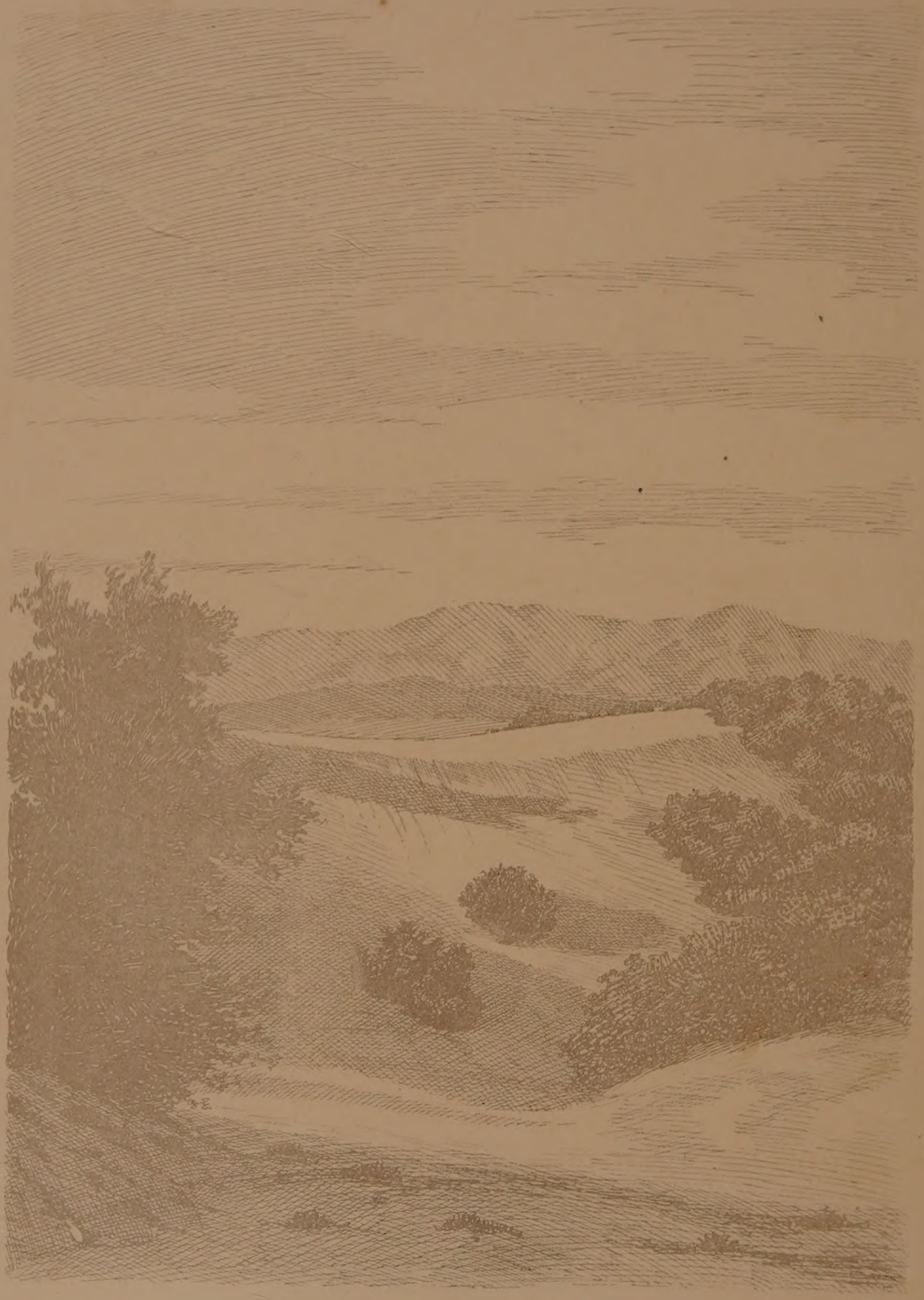
THE DESERT

BRUCE W. McDANIEL

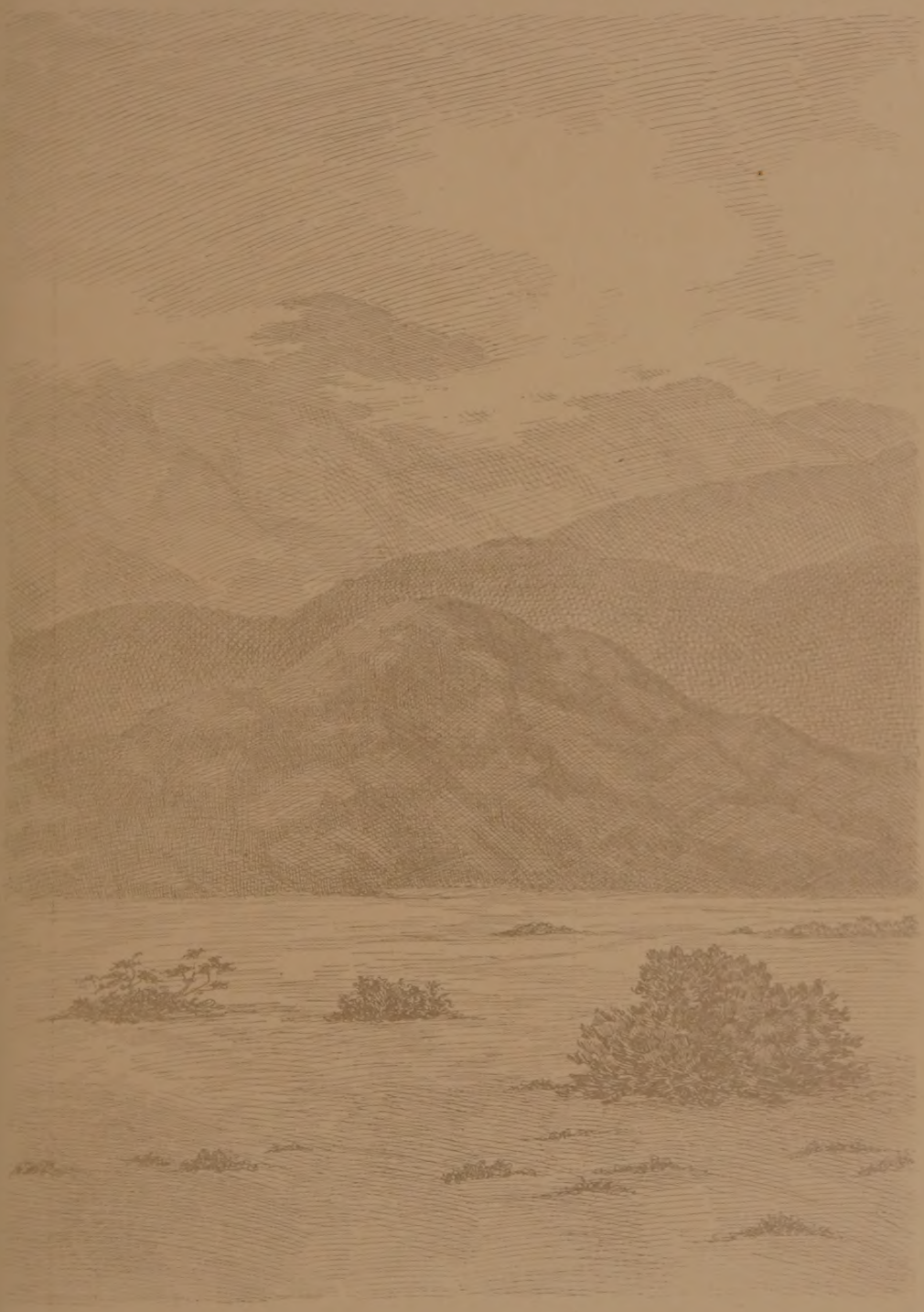
Valentuch Harris

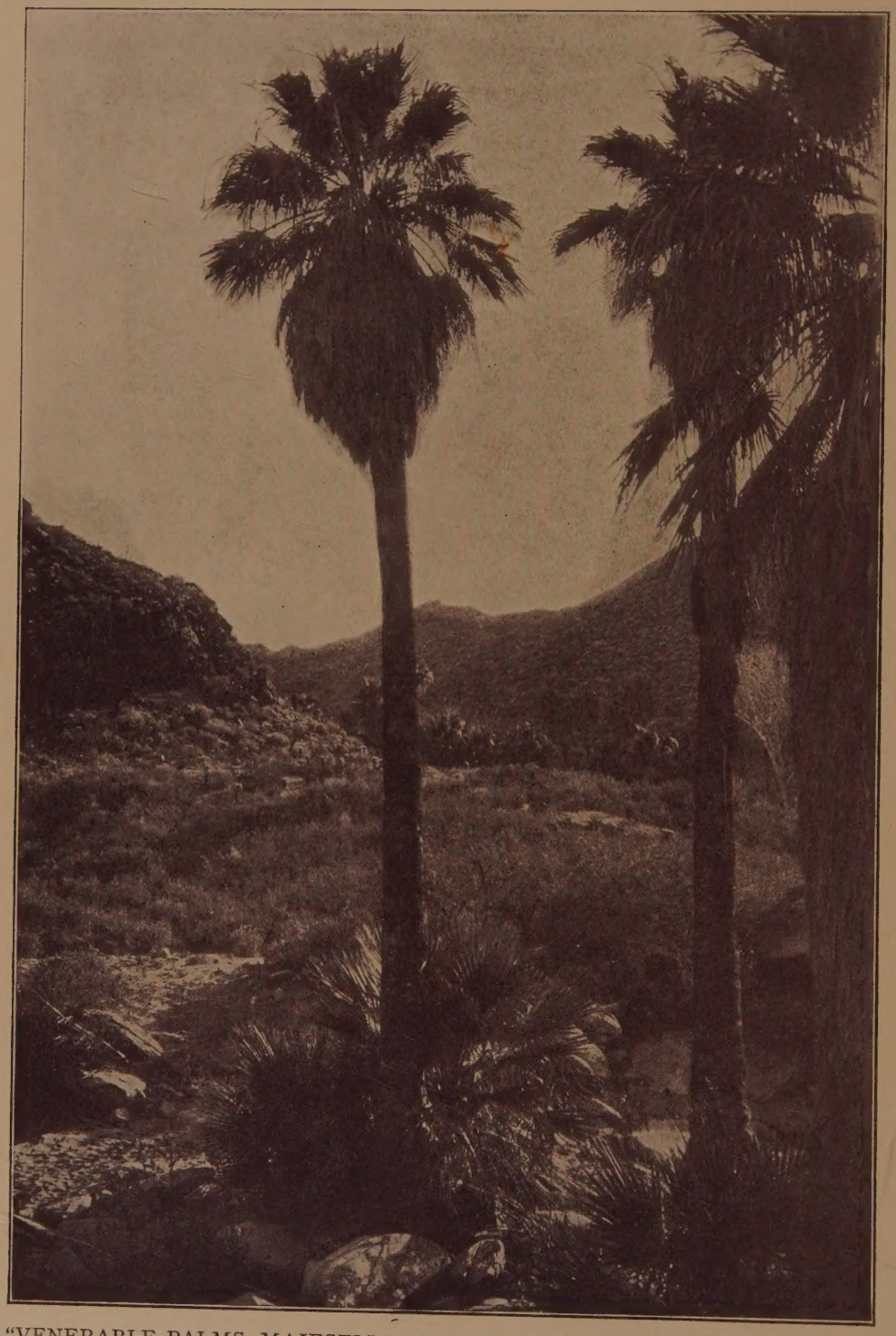
Palm Springs, 1928.



THE DESERT

GOD'S CRUCIBLE





"VENERABLE PALMS, MAJESTIC IN THEIR PLACE, TO HEAVEN LIFT THEIR ARMS IN SILENT TRIBUTE."

THE DESERT

GOD'S CRUCIBLE

BRUCE W. McDANIEL

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TO MY WIFE

whose faith is like the rugged hills;
whose love is pure as desert air, and
whose heart is constantly atune with
free-born spirits of the dune
I dedicate this book.

MAN

Soul-sick and wearied by worldly strife ofttimes raises his voice in sorrow and despair. Blinded by material, superficial things; buried beneath the burdensome cares of Life; deafened by the rush and roar of man-made civilization, he has vainly groped for happiness and solace—then bowed his head in resignation.

THE DESERT

to him opens wide its gates of promise. Let him but see its glories unfold; bare his head to its soothing sun; feel the vigor of its wandering winds; listen to its voice, and understand—then will his heart sing again, his spirit be refreshed and peace fill his soul.

If these few lines bring to you this message of the Desert, I shall be happy.

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THE DESERT

BOOK ONE

God's Crucible

THE VOICE OF MAN

A wounded lion may solace seek beside
The towering rock or waving reed.
The thrush in flight by arrow stopped,
Oft planes to safety in the sheltering thicket
And the fleeing deer in peace may tremble
Where the lights and shadows play upon
The fern-banked mountain stream.
To all of these, both Time and God are kind.
But who can say that he who wounds the
Heart, and through it sears the Soul, has
Not a wound unhealing made?

THE DESERT MENDER

As the old gray-haired mender of broken toys
Fills the empty dolls with sawdust, and
Spirit puts into the dusty wooden soldier,
So the Desert pours new Faith into empty hearts of men,
And mends the shattered, dimming souls of Life.

Day is done—
Human toys into the darkened corners of Life
Are flung, battered and broken—
Scarred and twisted by thoughtless hands;
Hearts crushed 'neath senseless feet that
Restlessly move on and on—
Playthings once so bright and new,
Now worn and dull—forgotten—
Tossed into the heap of
Shattered souls— to lie there
Buried deeper when Tomorrow's
Play is done.

As the old gray-haired mender of broken toys
Fills the empty dolls with sawdust, and
Spirit puts into the dusty wooden soldier,
So the Desert pours new Faith into empty hearts of men,
And mends the shattered, dimming souls of Life.

"THE DESERT POURS NEW FAITH INTO EMPTY HEARTS OF MEN—"

THE DESERT RAT

Inch by inch 'neath the blazing sun,
Groping blindly—Life's race near run,
Gray hair matted—worn shirt half torn
Scarred face deep creased by jealous thorn,
Stumbling, mumbling thru teeth dark stained,
Clutching his throat with hands that pained,
As a million devils, with irons red-hot
Had seared and burned each quivering spot,
Onward he staggers—haggard, old—
A desert rat—with a thirst for gold.

Night comes—and its purple mantle dim
Spreads softly over the mountain rim.
The desert sobs—all else is still,
Weird shadows people yon guarding hill.
A lone star falls—the moon's pale gleam
On rippling sands paints a silv'ry stream.
A soul unchained slips quickly away
As the wind caresses a head of gray.
A journey is ended—a story is told,
A desert rat, with a thirst for gold.

"WHO SEEKS MY GOLD ALONE FINDS DEATH."

THE VOICE OF THE DESERT

Who seeks my gold alone, finds Death.
Who comes to me with Faith and open heart
Yield I my soul.

"WHO COMES TO ME WITH FAITH AND OPEN HEART YIELD I MY SOUL."

THE JOSHUA TREE

Weird guardian of the desert's fatal gold;
Gnarled arms twisted, wrapped in thorned armor gray.
Enchained spirits, banished, cast in tree-like mould,
Communing with the moon by night, the sun by day.

Phantom souls, fed by hidden buried streams of Life,
Scourged by wanton winds and burning sands;
Dumb, though wise in lore of sand-waste strife,
Blossoming forth with clusters white in barren lands,
God's servant odd, art thou,
Thou Joshua tree.

"GOD'S SERVANT ODD ART THOU, THOU JOSHUA TREE—"

THE DESERT WIND

Dawn's pink tints into the desert's burnished cup in silence flow;
Peace wanders from the towering, rock-built hills to valleys far below.
God's hands seem to have wrought but lasting charm and grace;
The Joshua tree and venerable palm, majestic in their place,
To Heaven lift their arms in silent tribute.
A Day is born.

Suddenly the desert sobs—the sky grows dull and drear;
Peace hides her face—the palm's green fronds draw closer in their fear.
Down from the hills, with fiendish cry and hissing, burning breath,
Rides the Desert Wind, and he and Hate and stalking Death
To Heaven lift their arms in mocking tribute.
A Storm is born.

Howling, shrieking, swirling, beating, wind-devils fill the place;
Grinding, cutting, snarling, shifting, sand-devils wildly race;
God lifts his hand—his legion rides so dauntless, bold;
The wind is gone; and Peace, the palm and Joshua tree so old
To Heaven lift their arms in thankful tribute.
Faith is re-born.

"DARK CROUCHING HILLS MAJESTIC LIE—"

SPIRIT OF THE DESERT

Spirit of the desert—
The rugged hill, thrusting aloft its shaggy head,
Once proud and haughty in its airy kingdom high,
To shifting sands, hither and thither by vagrant winds
now led,
Change I.

Spirit of the desert—
On these same sands that human spirits shun,
The primrose lives, where man must die.
Tall stately palms, defying thirst and sun,
Guard I.

Spirit of the desert—
Boastful souls, striving in their worldly way,
Beneath my countless grains of sand now lie
And on the barren mound, the thorny cactus gray
Place I.

Spirit of the desert—
At eve a cooling canopy of purple hue
I fling across the sun-scorched burning sky.
The thirst of leaf and drooping flower with dew
Quench I.

Spirit of the desert—
As deep night comes, my desert folk I call
Around my lowly throne, and there, 'neath swirling
stars on high,
Our thanks give we to God—Spirit of All,
For only the Desert's spirit am I.

"TALL STATELY PALMS, DEFYING THIRST AND SUN—"

DESERT NIGHT

Night pins her jewels for earth to see
On heaven's deep-blue canopy.
Fantastic shadows dot the dune,
As silent wings glide past the moon.

Wavering trill of "Billie" owl,
And slinking coyote's low howl,
From lonely place below the hill
Float weirdly out of coulee still.

Dark crouching hills majestic lie
In bold relief against the sky,
Like slumbering pre-historic beasts,
Awaiting dawn's warmth in the East.

"FANTASTIC SHADOWS DOT THE DUNE—"

THE DESERT SPRING

Passions melt when moon-cloud shadows swing;
All hates are gone at the desert spring.

Near the wind-scarred rocks of Phantom Pass,
Guarded by palms grown hoary and gray,
Lies a sparkling spring, near cached away,
In a sand-built bowl fringed 'round with grass.

In the hollow of this lowly bowl,
God there keeps alike for man and beast,
No more for one, nor the other least—
The flowing force of the desert's soul.

Within the bounds of the Sun-God's range,
Dull sand-bird and scaly, crawling thing
Depend for life on this whisp'ring spring
That rules the desert in manner strange.

Pulsing savage heart with savage heart
Cruelly battles 'neath the sun of day;
But glorious night sends wrath away
And leveling peace bids death depart.

Passions melt when moon-cloud shadows swing;
Killing beasts beside their timid prey
Drink deeply—man, bird and wolf-dog grey.
All hates are gone at the desert spring.

"ALL HATES ARE GONE AT THE DESERT SPRING."

THE DESERT VAGABOND

What moots it if my boots are worn,
My shirt by rock and cactus torn?
No king nor prince of any land,
Has such royal gifts as I command!

Enchained by spell of desert night,
Alone with God and stars blue-bright,
My eyes upraised to purpled sky,
'Neath dozing palm, I, musing, lie.

Warm pressing sands my lowly bed;
My robes—Night's canopy o'erhead.
Soft music, fit for nymphs to hear,
Wild roguish winds hum in my ear.

While on God's velvet floor above,
Blue stars evolve their dance of love;
Whole worlds, in rhythmic strange ballet,
Dance on for me, till hushed by day.

What moots it if my boots are worn,
My shirt by rock and cactus torn?
No king nor prince of any land,
Has such royal gifts as I command!

"'NEATH DOZING PALMS, I MUSING LIE—"

THE DESERT DAWN

Brilliant stars and moon grow dim;
Soft breezes that have fanned the panting desert
Steal into the canyons of the hills
That rim the silent sea of sage and sand.

Low hushed calls of gray-winged bird,
And eerie howl of slinking beast of prey,
Across the sweeping space is faintly heard;
Then all is still—the desert murmurs die.

As Arabs kneel and eastward turn to pray,
When tolling bell and burnished sinking sun
Proclaim the passing of another day,
So bows the desert at the hour of dawn.

Full bursting forth in riotous splendor gay,
Painting the hills with reds and deepest gold,
Dispelling shadows brown and sullen gray,
Triumphant down the sky rides dawn!

"WARM PRESSING SANDS MY LOWLY BED—"

CRONIES

We're cronies, the desert wind and I,
Our home's from earth to clouds on high.

We've the song of the bird,
The sheen of the Moon;
Soft shifting sands,
Bees buzzing at noon;
Long purple shadows that
Dwindle, then grow;
Silence broken by voices low,
As the desert's people, in rhythmic glee,
Whisper their secrets from God to me.

We're cronies, the desert wind and I,
Our home's from earth to clouds on high.

"LONG PURPLE SHADOWS THAT DWINDLE AND GROW—"

TRAMPING THROUGH THE SAGE

Ah! you may sing of the restless sea,
The sea with its salty spray,
But give me the smell of the purple sage
And the peace of a desert day.

Out there——

Swift gridirons flip their tails and run,
To hide behind a cactus screen;
Brave humming birds skim past the sun
Away to hidden coulees green;
The long-eared jacks go leaping by,
Then pause to gaze with watchful eye;
When I go tramping through the sage,
The purple sea of scented sage.

Gray yuccas bow with stately grace,
Old courtiers before their king;
Verbenas lift a blushing face
To kiss the winds which softly sing
Of love, and then whirl on in haste
To some forgotten sea-swept waste;
When I go roaming through the sage.
The scented sea of purple sage.

Don mesquite tries to bar my way
And reaches out with leaf and thorn
To bid me rest, and pass the day
Within its arms, so gnarled and worn;
While off beyond the creeping dune
A canyon wren begins her tune;
When I go drifting through the sage,
The singing sea of nodding sage.

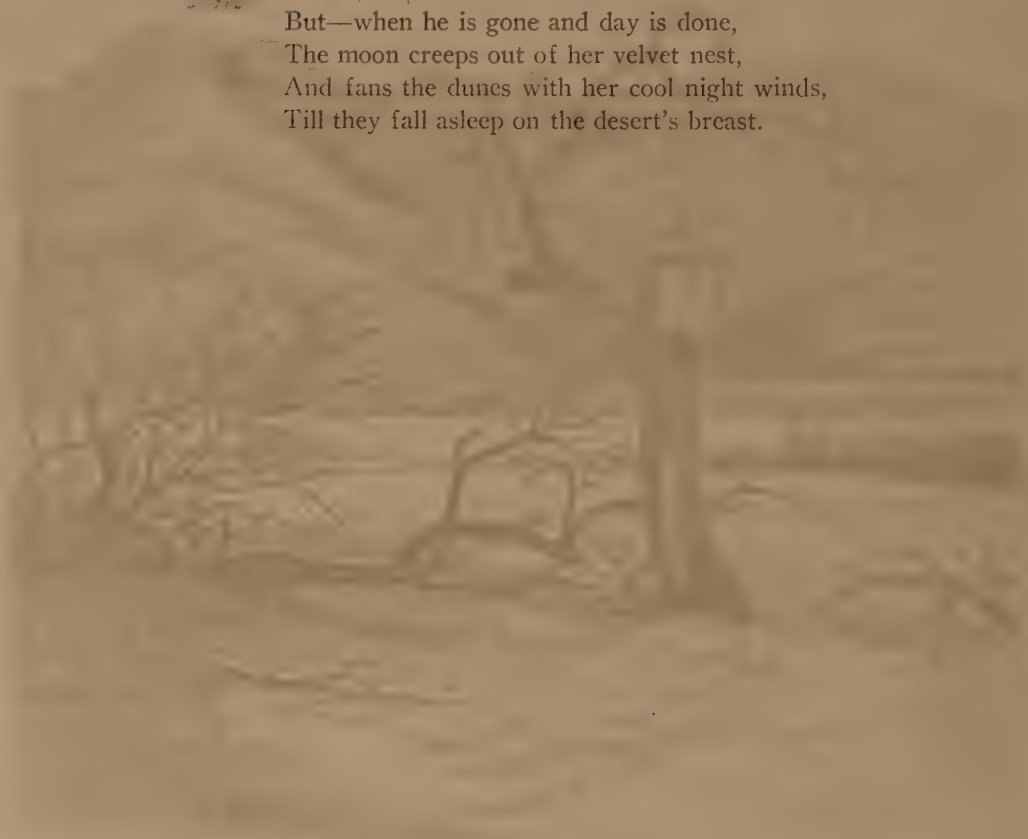
"VERBENAS LIFT A BLUSHING FACE—"

THE SUN GOD

The Sun God rides on the wings of day,
O'er the eastern rampart's crest,
Bidding blue stars be on their way,
And driving the moon down into the west.

He flays the sands till they glare with hate,
And burns the hills to a sullen red,
Then follows the trail of the fleeing stars,
Leaving the desert parched and dead.

But—when he is gone and day is done,
The moon creeps out of her velvet nest,
And fans the dunes with her cool night winds,
Till they fall asleep on the desert's breast.



"THE MOON CREEPS OUT OF HER VELVET NEST—"

DESERT GOLD

You lie!
No gold is hidden in your heart,
You mocking hill of hell.
For twenty years I've slaved and starved
To make you pay—
And now I'm through.

You're dead.
With splintered pick and blistered hands,
I've fought you all alone.
Your shriveled guts burn in the sun,
You mocking fiend of stone—
And now I'm done.

You fool!
I guard my gold for braver souls
Who dare to fight with death.
For twenty years I've lied and made
You waste your precious breath—
And now I've won.

You're dead!
A million men have sought to find
Where all my gold veins run;
But soon the bones of all of them
Lie bleaching in the sun—
And now it's you.

"I GUARD MY GOLD FOR BRAVER SOULS—"

A DESERT SANDSTORM

Sand, sand, sand, sand,
Drifting everywhere.
Black sand, gray sand, sands that glow and glare.
Shifting, crunching, swirling, bunching,
Sands that sear and stare.
  Death sings its mirthless tunes
  Through the burning desert dunes.

Sand, sand, sand, sand,
Rushing like a stream;
Hot sand, sharp sand, sands that shriek and scream;
Biting, burning, cutting, churning,
Sands that cringe and gleam.
  Death chants its gruesome tunes
  Through the crouching desert dunes.

Sand, sand, sand, sand,
Cutting like sharp steel;
Mad sand, wild sand, sands that whirl and reel,
Piling, curling, boiling, turning;
Sands that dash and wheel.
  Death plays its soul-less tunes
  Through the shifting desert dunes.

Sand, sand, sand, sand,
Beating at my head.
Live sand, sad sand, sands so dull and dead.
Moaning, toiling, groaning, mocking,
Sands as cold as lead.
  Death howls in rhymeless tunes
  Through the trembling desert dunes.

"LIVE SAND, SAD SAND, SANDS SO DULL AND DEAD—"

Sand, sand, sand, sand,
Snarling like a beast;
Fierce sands, cruel sands, sands from west and east.
Hissing, cutting, hounding, gritting,
Sands that kill and feast.
Death stills Life's hopeful tunes
In the panting desert dunes.

Sand, sand, sand, sand,
Killing flower and tree.
Bad sand, good sand, sands that dance in glee;
Slashing, combing, gnashing, foaming,
Sands of Salton Sea.
Death lures with tempting tunes
Through the silent desert dunes.

Sand, sand, sand, sand,
Riding wings of hate.
Slow sand, fast sand, sands of red and slate.
Choking, yelling, poking, swelling,
Sands that never mate.
Death mocks the wind's wild tunes
In the sullen desert dunes.

"OCOTILLOS SWAYING WITH A TOUCH OF ROYAL GRACE—"

WHEN THE RED SUN SMOULDERS

Pray tell me, friend, does the desert speak
When the red sun smoulders o'er Pinto Peak?
And what may one see in that blazing land
Of painted hills and panting sand?

Ocotillos swaying,
With a touch of royal grace,
Leaving scars and etchings
On the desert's sandy face.
Dancing devils whirling
Past staring rock and dune,
Keeping step and dancing
To the wind's barbaric tune.
Pasianos strutting
Thru the creosotes and sage,
Stabbing lazy lizards
In a haughty hungry rage.
Chuckawallas sunning
On the bosom of the hill,
Darting swift for cover
With the blue dove's warning trill.
Black-winged buzzards soaring
O'er a sea of sage and sand,
Searching for the victim
Of a cursed thirsty land.
And death with life a fighting
With a grim and fierce desire,
Seeking souls of puny men
To feed the desert's fire.

Ah, yes, my friend, the desert does speak
When the red sun smoulders o'er Pinto Peak;
And these one may see in the blazing land
Of painted hills and panting sand.

"O'ER A SEA OF SAGE AND SAND—"

TEN THOUSAND MORE

Ten thousand men lie buried
In restless desert sands;
Ten thousand more come tramping on
To brave these blazing lands.
Ten thousand stars gleam overhead
When night blooms o'er the ridge;
Ten thousand buzzards wait the dead
To cross life's shattered bridge.

Oh! the desert trail is the way to life,
For those who need its breath;
But the desert path is the lane to death
For those of lust and strife.

Ten thousand years have come and fled,
Since first the march began;
Ten thousand hearts have cracked and b'ed,
And most were hearts of man.
Ten thousand tongues are parched and dry,
Though drenched with sandy rain;
Ten thousand victims choke and cry
To drown their floods of pain.

Oh! the hearts of men are strong and bold,
And their hopes are stronger still;
But thirst and sun will wear them down
Till desert fires grow cold.

Ten thousand men go marching by,
As brave as those of yore;
Ten thousand souls must fall and die
To pave the way for more.
Ten thousand suns shall rise and wane,
And nations live and fall;
Ten thousand feet shall tread in vain
When desert voices call.

"THE DESERT TRAIL IS THE WAY TO LIFE—"

SALTON SEA

* * * *

A sea below a sea—
Two hundred feet and more
Below a mighty ocean's shore
Lies Salton Sea.

* * * *

For forty miles it stretches out
Across a sandy sea;
Yet old and hoary wave-worn rocks
Tell what it used to be.

* * * *

Where hides the armored lizard
And coils the rattlesnake,
Once moved the restless waters
Of this lonely ancient lake.

* * * *

Brave trusting souls rush to its edge
When weary pack-teams halt,
To find the blue-green sea of life
Is filled with bitter salt.

* * * *

Within its shallow bosom now
The green-nosed mullets pass;
Or pause beside a brown-red reef
To eat the salt sea grass.

* * * *

Queer geysers squirt their slate-gray mud
Close by a painted pot;
Cool waters mingle night and day
With waters steaming hot.

* * * *

An oval emerald in a sea
Of thirsty desert sands;
Its lifeblood being slowly sucked
By blazing barren lands.

* * * *

A sea below a sea—
The sullen sun and bashful moon
Gaze down in sorrow on a
Lonely dying sea.

"MONKS OF GRAY, SO CALM AND WISE—"

THE PALMS

Sages of the Sands

Hoary sages of silent lands,
Ruled by the sun and vagrant sands;
Keepers of luring yellow gold,
Cached in the desert's grim stronghold.
Princes royal, in your robes of gray,
Guarding God's children night and day.

Ghosts of the long forgotten past
Come to you for keeping at last;
In your hearts are hidden away
Vanished secrets of yesterday.
Monks of gray, so calm and wise,
Judging the world through mellowed eyes.

Brave seas have lived and melted away,
Leaving but bowls of bleaching clay;
Mountain peaks have been changed to sand
And souls have died in your strange land,
Since first you raised your shaggy heads
Above a kingdom men call dead.

Fierce winds may scourge you with hot sands,
And tear your throats with ruthless hands;
The sun may burn your fronds to brown
And Time your weary heads bow down,
But you shall reign till sands grow cold
And men have lost their thirst for gold.

"HOARY SAGES OF SILENT LANDS—"

A NEW DAY

Dawn—
And the desert sun flings
Forth its golden hues,
To tint the
Clouds and
Sky.

Dawn—
And the lazy desert winds
Kiss each tall
Hoary
Palm
Goodbye.

Dawn—
And the shaggy mountain
Peaks, change purple
Robes for robes
Of deepest
Gray.

Dawn—
And God, with tender
Grace, gives the palms, the
Birds and you,
A new-born
Day.

"A NEW-BORN DAY."

NIGHT-BLOWN SANDS

Pray tell me, friend, does the desert speak
When the blue moon hovers o'er Pinto Peak?
And what one may see in that lonely land,
Of purple hills and night-blown sand?

White clouds drifting past a lazy moon,
Casting lacy shadows on a sleeping dune;
Gray birds fluttering through the mesquite brush,
Calling—calling softly in the deep night hush.

Swift feet leaping in a silent land,
Leaving crimson stories on a page of sand;
Warm winds whispering to a nodding palm,
Keeping—keeping vigil in the starlight calm.

Long trails winding over crag and hill,
Leading ever downward through a coulee still;
Weary souls communing by a cooling spring,
Drinking—drinking deeply while the crickets sing.

Bright eyes peering out of burrows deep,
Guarding eerie castles while the wee folk sleep;
And blue stars dancing in the far away,
Fading—fading swiftly with the dawn of day.

Ah, yes, my friend, the desert does speak,
When the blue moon hovers o'er Pinto Peak;
And these you may see in the lonely land,
Of purple hills and night-blown sand.

WARM WINDS WHISPERING TO A NODDING PALM—"

SAND DERVISHES

Howling devils dancing
  In a weird fantastic land.
Dervishes a whirling
  With your shrouds of burning sand.

Shrieking devils sweeping,
  From the East and South and West,
Beating and a tearing
  At the desert's quiv'ring breast.

Mocking devils gloating,
  As you twist each crouching dune.
Vandal fiends a swirling
  To the wind's satanic tune.

Screaming devils choking,
  Ev'ry beast and bird and tree.
Leaving only sun parched bones
  To mark a trail for me.

THE PRIMROSE

Alone in a far-flung snarling land
A primrose grows in a sea of sand.
Its wee pink face greets each flaming day
And smiles when stars crowd the sun away.
Though harsh winds sweep with angry howl
And gloomy canyons sulk and growl,
When the primrose lifts its dainty head
God lives in the sea that seems stark dead!

THE DESERT INDIAN

An Indian's trail is the open trail,
Where the pasianos run;
His soul is wild as the crested quail,
And fierce as the desert's sun.

His spirit yearns in a hungry way
For the silent hills and dunes,
Where yucca's bloom and smoke trees sway
To the wind's barbaric tunes.

A lonely heart in a lonely place—
Child of the desert sun;
Trying to learn with patient grace
What the White Man has begun.

"THE SILENT HILLS AND DUNES—"

THE SMOKE-TREE TRAIL

Give me the trail that winds along
Through the sage and smoke-tree land,
Where gray birds sing a cheery song
And the wind caresses the sand.
The trail of peace and promised rest
Where the desert's children run.
The trail which goes forever west
And loses itself in the sun.

"GIVE ME THE TRAIL THAT WINDS ALONG THROUGH THE SAGE AND SMOKE-TREE LAND—"

COME WITH ME

Come sit with me alone some night
  In the lap of a desert dune,
And watch the blue stars, one by one,
  Steal out to worship the moon.

Come hear the palm trees gently chant
  Of a faith that is true and deep,
And see the mighty mountain crags
  Crouched down in restful sleep.

Come feel the warm winds kiss your face
  In the spell of a full-blown night,
As moonbeams dance with nymphal grace
  And put dark shadows to flight.

Come breathe the sage's rare perfume
  As it floats through the vibrant air,
And see the waxen primrose bloom
  In the mouth of a fox's lair.

Come drink the draught of mystic balm
  Which only the desert distills,
And be at peace, e'er noisy dawn
  Starts creeping o'er peaks and hills.

Come sit with me alone some night
  Where the smoke-trees sway and croon,
And watch the blue stars, one by one,
  Steal out and worship the moon.

"COME HEAR THE PALM TREES GENTLY CHANT—"

THE YUCCA

Blazing with your flame pure white
Through the hushed and crowding night;
Pointing out the hidden way
To the wanderer by day.
Lighting coulee, dune and slope,
With your waxen flame of hope,
Shining high o'er rock and clod,
Reaching up the sky to God.
You—the desert's guiding wraith.
You—the desert's cross of faith.

"REACHING UP THE SKY TO GOD—THE YUCCA."

GYPSY DUNES

Desert dunes are tents of sands
Pitched by phantom gypsy bands;
Tents, within whose shadows deep,
Weary winds curl down to sleep
While the desert's host of dead
Silently keeps watch o'er head.

In their restless folds of gray,
Countless souls are hid away;
Souls of men, once wild and free
As the haughty ironwood tree,
Which the dunes may claim as prey
Should they chance to pass its way.

Gypsy dunes may kneel to rest
As red sun swords pierce the west;
Yet, when moon and stars are sped,
Morning finds the dunes have fled,
Leaving husks of black and dun
Staring blindly at the sun.

Unborn ages shall grow old
E'er their secrets are half told.
They, who keep life's mystic log,
Some day shall dispel the fog
And reveal to man at last
Pages of the vanished past.

"GYPSY DUNES ARE TENTS OF SANDS—"

MORNING IN THE DUNES

A sand dove paused in its airy way
On the crest of a desert dune,
And greeted the flaming prince of day
With a hopeful and cheery tune.

The song was caught by the morning wind
And carried far down in the west,
Arousing the lazy greasewood trees
From a moonlit and shadowed rest.

"Arise! Awaken!", it seemed to sing,
"Come bathe in the warm sunlight",
And then the singer, on flashing wing,
Swiftly melted away in flight.

How many doves are singing their lays
To waken the sleepy gray dunes;
How many men are greeting the days
To the lilt of a dove's clear tunes?

The desert trail is a dim highway,
And its toll is measured in pain;
But the sand dove's song at birth of day
Lures one out on the trail again.

"THE DESERT TRAIL IS A DIM HIGHWAY—"

VANISHING TRAILS

Yon crouching desert dune
Where yestereve my lagging feet
Left bold and staring marks
When I fought madly
Through the sand,

Today is smooth as ice
And white as some cool drift of snow
Banked tightly 'gainst an old
Worm fence in some far
Frozen land.

At birth of each new day
The desert thumbs the book of life
And turns a spotless page
On which to keep the
March of man;

But, ere night fully dies,
The jealous winds with noiseless wings
Have brushed the trail away
And left no trace of
Man-made plan.

How many fearless men
Have vainly fought the shifting dunes
Since first the desert's gates
Were opened wide
Before them?

And what price must man pay
Ere sands and winds shall bow in peace
And let the passing feet
Leave trails for other men
Behind them?

"YON CROUCHING DESERT DUNE—"

BOOK TWO

Tales of the Desert

THE BIRTH OF THE DESERT

Have you heard the tale the Yaquis tell
Of the coming of the heat—
The thrilling tale the Indians tell
Of the desert's scorching heat?

"Ten million moons or more ago
Blue waters ruled the land,
And tossed their wild waves to and fro
Where now 'tis burning sand.

"Mount San Jacinto was a child,
The sun was scarce of age;
Fantastic creatures, huge and wild,
Trod o'er life's molten page.

"From out the sea sprang fish and fowl,
The palm trees groaned with dates;
And mighty demons once did prowl
Thru forests, with their mates.

"Far up above the mad sea's shore
Lived Kee-wa, lord and king;
And with him, says our sacred lore,
His daughter, fair White Wing.

"Her eyes were brighter than the star
Which rode the sky above,
And there men came from near and far
To woo and win her love.

"One night yon mountain rocked and screamed,
Its mouth belched fire and smoke;
And from its very depths, it seemed,
A strange beast rose and spoke:

" 'My master bids this message bring,
For this I've dared to ride;
He bids you give him fair White Wing
To be his queenly bride.'

"Each squaw and child crept out of sight
As Kee-wa raised his bow;
An arrow sped in deadly flight
And laid the speaker low.

"Red lightning smote the mountain's side
And tore its heart away;
The beast spat fire, then slowly died,
As black clouds killed the day.

"Then out of whirling coils of flame,
With scorching, burning breath,
The legions of the devil came,
And with them rode cruel death.

"They loosed the red-hot gates of hell;
The blue sea fled and dried;
And with one last and curdling yell,
The mountain gasped and died.

"For fifty moons, our legends say,
They burned the helpless land,
'Till all was dead and naught could stay
But red-hot winds and sand."

And now you've heard the tale they tell
Of the coming of the heat;
The thrilling tale the Yaquis tell
Of the desert and its heat.

"DIG ME A GRAVE IN THE DESERT'S CHEST—"

I'VE GOT TO GO

Cursed be the lure of that blazing land,
Where fiends with devils mate;
And life is choked in a sea of sand,
Lashed by the winds of hate.

Its lying voice has hounded me so
That it's beaten my soul out flat;
God knows I'm tired—but I've got to go,
'Tis the fate of a desert rat.

Cast me adrift when the sun rides high
Far over the desert's head;
Making the sand-dunes moan and sigh
With the pain of its restless dead.

Give me some beans and a snack of flour,
Slung on a burro's back;
And I'll tempt death some dawn-red hour
On the trail of a sand-swept track.

Rattlers may strike from a deadly coil,
Maybe I'll tire of the drudge and moil;
Often my back shall pain from toil,
But I'll plod on like a senseless ass.

Teach me the story the blue stars tell,
The tale of the blood-stained sand;
And I'll push on through the jaws of hell,
To the heart of that cursed land.

Pick me a shack near a water-hole,
Where the bob-cats spit and prowl,
And pack-rats gnaw at the old ridge-pole
As the gray coyotes howl.

"FAR OVER THE DESERT'S HEAD—"

There let me fight, like the brave men fought,
Who carved out the desert's gold;
Doubly earning the prize they sought
In the bowels of thirst's stronghold.

Dig me a grave in the desert's chest,
Near the base of an old palm tree,
And let me rest, when my soul's gone west,
In the arms of the desert sea.

DESERT DEATH

Sun—
Flaming like a seething
Fire in the distant
West—

Hope—
Burning in our weary hearts,
For we've earned our
Rest—

Gold—
Straining in the bulging sacks
Within our treasure
Chest—

We've won—the desert's yielded us its soul—
Its cursed yellow golden soul;
And we are here—alive—and yonder lies our goal.

Hot—
Winds burn like waves of
Flame from out an
Oven pit—

Sharp—
Sands sting my bleeding
Lips by blazing sun
Knives split—

Black—
Rocks shimmer in the
Glare, like living imps
Of hell—

Fierce—
Thorns tear my face until
I scream and curse
And yell—

He's gone—you've killed my pal—
    You fiends of hissing breath—
And I am here—alone—God! how he hated death!

Dead—
    His bursting eyes and blackened
    Tongue stare out in
    Mock derision—

Dead—
    And still I struggle on within
    The desert's
    Endless prison.

Dead—
    Black buzzards circle o'er
    My head and wait till I
    Shall die—

Dead—
    No clouds drift in from
    Out the east to quench the
    Burning sky.

Dead—
    Two bodies buried in the
    Sand and buzzards
    Wait the night—

Dead—
    Dawn brings the sun o'er
    Peak and dune to bleach
    Bare bones pure white.

THE MIRAGE

God's mighty sun had burned its way
'Cross panting sky since break of day;
Fierce heat waves lapped the tilted rock
That sheltered rat and chap'ral cock;
And restless sands were blistering hot
Within the desert's burnished pot,
As Death and Thirst, with fiendish haste,
Sought human prey in mesquite waste.

Snarling sands that bite and burn,
Whirling sands that twist and turn,
Laughing, chanting, dancing, boiling,
Screeching, taunting, mocking, moiling,
Gray sands—and brown—and black.

From hidden claim in yonder crags,
With brown free gold in bulging bags,
Past trumpet weed and clutching thorn,
Two desert rats since early morn—
Their canteens lost, old springs dust-dry—
Seeing dimly through sand-scarred eye—
Had stumbled on with gasping breath
In race with Thirst and Desert Death.

Snarling sands that bite and burn,
Whirling sands that twist and turn,
Laughing, chanting, dancing, boiling,
Screeching, taunting, mocking, moiling,
Gray sands—and brown—and black.

Haunting shadows of buzzards drear
Told coyote man-food was near;
Gray lizard slipped with scratching sound
To ammos burrows beneath the ground.
"I'm through," gasped Bill, with bursting lip;
"The desert wins my gold this trip"
And fell beside the cactus grim
Whose claws reached out and pinioned him.

Snarling sands that bite and burn,
Whirling sands that twist and turn,
Laughing, chanting, dancing, boiling,
Screeching, taunting, mocking, moiling,
Gray sands—and brown—and black.

Then suddenly the sand had fled!
Bright life appeared where all seemed dead.
In place of brush of sullen hue
Were nodding palms and waters blue.
"A lake! A lake! its all right, Bill,"
Cried the other, and ran until
He fell to drink, on swollen hands and
Bleeding lips met mocking sands.

Snarling sands that bite and burn,
Whirling sands that twist and turn,
Laughing, chanting, dancing, boiling,
Screeching, taunting, mocking, moiling,
Gray sands—and brown—and black.

"PAST TRUMPET WEED AND CLUTCHING THORN—"

SAND BORN FAITH

Free gold lies buried in high rock lands;
Fool's gold consorts with the snarling sands;
But the finest gold in the desert's pan
Is the unbroken faith of man in man.

Old pals for years through thick and thin;
The two had trodden sand-paths dim
From Bullion Peak to Mesquite Lake,
Playing life's game of give and take.
Lured on by vagrant glowing tale
Of hidden lode on distant trail,
With stubborn grit and new-born hope
Again they trudged up Pinion slope.

Tortured by blazing sun of day;
Threatened by hanging walls of gray;
Grubstake low and bodies torn
By splintered rock and jagged thorn;
Digging madly for hidden ledge
Five weary months with pick and wedge
Had failed to bring the gold to light
For which men die and nations fight.

Then fate stepped in like a faithful pard
And played the lone and winning card;
Striking a rough ledge hanging low
One last and spiteful glancing blow
Old Bill had swung his pick aright
And laid gold-bearing vein in sight.
"We've found her, Pal—the big pay streak,
Lost phantom lode of Pinion Peak."

Sweating and toiling day and night;
Working the lode with all their might,
They dug and found the dull free gold
Just like the vagrant tale had told.
"Our water's down and goin's bad,
Best hit the back-trail now, my lad,"
Urged Bill and lashed the precious sack
On to the burro's heavy pack.

Two days they plunged with frantic haste
From rocky hill through cactus waste,
Racing with death and stalking thirst
To reach Sheep Spring and palm shade first.
Weighted down by keg and heavy sack,
Stumbling beneath its goading pack,
The burro slipped on rugged hill
And thund'ring rocks crashed down on Bill.

"Just hang on tightly here until
I make the spring and come back, Bill."
And Bill, with guileless faith, and hope,
Saw pal and gold cross treach'rous slope.
Night followed soon on heels of day
Driving the sun's fierce heat away.
Then crawling forms began to slide
From rocky dens with noiseless glide.

Clutching the gold with trembling hands
The partner fought the whirling sands.
While luring voices low and clear
Seemed whisp'ring softly in his ear;
"Why worry now—go let him die!
No one will know but you and I.
You've won the gold and here's your chance
To taste of life and love and dance."

To him those bulging sacks of ore
Meant wealth untold—and something more;
A cozy home in meadows green
By side of singing gurgling stream,
Away from sand and barren gloom
Back there where perfumed springflowers bloom;
And dancing eyes of deepest gray
To welcome him at end of day.

"He's dead by now—it's only fair,
You've doubly earned your rightful share,"
The voices coaxed with winning tone
Till scarred brown eyes with gold lust shone.
"Ill make the spring in dead of night;
No living thing will see my flight."
And slinking past low hills that frown
He madly fled for nearest town.

"He's fighting hard—he's coming back!
By now he's reached the tumbled shack.
My God! the moonbeams seem like rain,
See! there he comes with long pack train."
And Bill raved on like cackling loon
Beneath the mocking tilted moon
While skulking beasts in moonlight dim
Death's vigil kept from canyon rim.

Night slipt beyond the crouching walls;
Blue dove and wren began to call;
Yet all seemed dead and strangely still
Around the rock beside the hill.
Long hours of day dragged on apace,
Harsh sands abused a parched worn face
'Till purple curtains fringed the west
And sullen sun sank down to rest.

"THROUGH CACTUS WASTE—"

Slim desert fox nosed warm night air;
The bob-cat left its stinking lair;
Dull scaly thing, with scratching sound,
Sped quickly over panting ground.
Swift blurring flash of venomed head
And rattler struck small pack-rat dead.
While wing of bat and trill of owl
Was hushed by weird coyote howl.

Then wolf-dogs ceased their curdling wail—
A shadow crossed the hazy trail;
And two worn hands, with tender care,
Raised Bill's still form and smoothed gray hair.
"Come! wake up, Bill"—a voice sobbed low.
"Your pal is here—it's time to go!"
And back the answer softly came,
"God bless you, pard—you've played the game."

Free gold lies buried in high rock lands;
Fool's gold consorts with the snarling sands;
But the finest gold in the desert's pan
Is the unbroken faith of man in man.

OUT OF HELL'S CAULDRON

"Hell's cauldron's boilin' again tonight,"
Whispered David to old Cactus Brand,
As the shrieking wind with fiendish might
Lashed the 'dobe with hissing sand.
"Gray death's a-givin' the sandstorm yell!
Hark! it's howlin' for you and for me—
The devil's drivin' more souls to hell,"
Muttered Brand to young David McGee.

The wind fiercely smote the cowering dune,
Grimly pounded the crouching gray shack.
The desert sobbed to the storm's weird tune
And the gale screamed mockingly back.
"A voice is callin'," gasped young McGee,
And he listened again for the cry.
"Can't you hear it pleading plaintively?
There! it's begging us come — you and I!"

"It's only a wolf-dog's wailing mate,
Or the scream of lone desert banshee
That's feelin' the pain of storm-born hate."
Murmured Brand to young gallant McGee.
Into the cauldron of snarling sharp sand
Plunged McGee, with fear gripping his heart.
"God pity his soul," cried Cactus Brand,
"For death's leading the race at the start."

Peace came once more to the Sun-god's land;
Gray dust coated rafters once black
And dawn was painting the restless sand
E'er McGee stumbled into the shack.
Love shoots his arrows in wondrous flight,
Strange fates guide the desert's wild strife—
The lass young McGee brought home that night
Now rules the gray shack as his wife!

BLIND GREASER JIM

Melted by blazing sun's fierce rays;
Fused by the whistling, whirling sands;
Odd friendships weld in mystic ways—
Cast in the forge of grim wastelands!

Strange chuck-mates roamed the desert trails
Past Pinon Peak to Bullion Rim,
But the strangest pair in campfire tales
Was Cactus Bill and old blind Jim.
Fantastic legends clothed their life,
Weird stories flowed from hill to hill;
Of stirring hours in sandstorm strife
Fought through by Jim and Cactus Bill.
O'er trails alive with five-toed tracks,
Past shifting dune and barren hill;
Through mesquite waste to hidden shacks
Old Jim was guided on by Bill.
Lone desert rat oft owed his life,
When lost far-out on sand-swept lands,
To Bill's canteen and flashing knife
Or Greaser Jim's gnarled sun-scarred hands.

One sultry night, some years ago,
The boys were camped near Big Sheep Hill
And talking on with voices low
Of what they'd heard of Cactus Bill.
When suddenly before the moon
A shadow fell on spring trail dim
And Bill strode in from out the gloom
A totin' poor blind Greaser Jim.
With shaking hands he laid poor Jim
Beside the nodding palm tree gray,
Then knelt in silence close to him
As if to keep night fears away.
The south winds smoothed blind Jim's gray head;
Swift bat wings flashed through moon gleam pale
And all the world seemed hushed and dead
As Bill poured out this gripping tale:

"THE FLAME OF DAWN WAS IN THE SKY—"

"Just fifteen years ago tonight
A greaser crawled into my shack;
Half wild from thirst and desert fright—
A splintered arrow in his back.
'God's mercy, gringo," came his plea,
'A drink or wounded greaser dies,'
And quiv'ring lips kept begging me
As fever flamed his bloodshot eyes.
I washed his wounds with greasewood tea;
He shared my grub from day to day,
Then—without word of thanks to me
One howling night he crept away.
I took the trail when morning came
To find the cuss and bring him back;
But mocking winds upset the game
By blotting out each trace and track.

"Folks say good deeds come back to you—
That mercy breeds reward ten-fold.
Well—seems like what they say is true,
For soon I struck some rich free gold.
Like slave that's chained to galley seat,
Beneath the lash of greed for ore
I toiled and moiled in desert heat
'Till cursed ledge would yield no more.
With clanging, crashing, dev'lish sound
Of crushing rock on jangling chain
I dragged the old arrastra 'round
'Till quiv'ring flesh grew numb from pain.
Each frowning hill loomed like a beast;
Fantastic faces leered at me;
Fierce winds swirled down from out the east;
Sun demons screeched aloud in glee.

"'Grind out the gold, you helpless fool'
That grim arrastra seemed to say,
And hideous monsters swarmed the pool
Amid the churning waters gray.
Then down the crouching panting hill
A horde of greasers seemed to float

And voices screamed 'They've licked you Bill'
As fiendish hands tore at my throat.
The next I knew I seemed to be
Upon a gurgling cooling stream;
Lured on by booming distant sea
Past swaying palms, as in a dream.
Then slowly all the palm trees fled;
Old friends were bending over me
And I was in my shack instead
Of rushing towards a pounding sea.

"They told me then of how they found
Ten thieving greasers near my shack,
With me staked out on hardened ground
And all my gold stuffed in their pack.
Above me hung old Greaser Jim
With buzzing flies about his head,
While buzzards circled canyon rim,
Drawn there to feast upon the dead.
Old Jim, with only fist and knife,
Across that shifting, glaring sand,
To guard the gold and save my life
Had fought against the sneaking band.
They beat him down with club and stone;
Stuck cholla barbs through both his eyes;
Then left him dangling there alone,
To swing and twist until he died."

When all the burning tale was told
The flame of dawn was in the sky;
Gray ashes in the fire were cold;
The desert sobbed with anguished cry.
Old Bill seemed lost in memory deep,
His arms about old Jim's gray head.
We thought perhaps he'd gone asleep;
But when we looked—they both were dead.

Melted by blazing sun's fierce rays;
Fused by the whistling, whirling sands;
Odd friendships weld in mystic ways—
Cast in the forge of grim wastelands!

THE REVENGE OF TAHQUITZ

Mount San Jacinto's snow-white head
Was lowly bowed in peaceful sleep;
Hot flaming passions all seemed dead
Within its mighty caverns deep.
From out the tilting desert moon
Poured gleaming brooks of silver light,
That seeped away in canyon gloom
As vivid day melts into night.

Though crag and cavern slept as dead,
The haunted canyon of Tahquitz—
Whose trails no Indian dared to tread—
Seemed filled with pulsing demon beasts.
As soughing wind caressed the palm,
Fierce evil spirits shrieked with glee;
Low moans disturbed the deep night's calm
And floated out towards Salton Sea.

The fiery tales the Indians told
Were scorned by Jim and Cactus Bill,
Whose shack perched near a ledge of gold
Within the arms of Tahquitz hill.
A gurgling stream sang near their door;
Their burros ranged the canyon still;
The ledge was yeilding rich pay ore
And Tahquitz guarded Jim and Bill.

Old Chief Ka-wee-yah's snow-white head
Was flung erect with kingly grace;
All thoughts of peace were crushed and dead
As passions stained his wrinkled face.
Swift burning words of stinging shame
Lashed warriors grouped 'neath canyon wall,
While council fires hurled tongues of flame
To lick the fronds of palm trees tall.

"Since first the stars came forth at night,
Or blazing sun rose in the east,
Our braves have ne'er been loath to fight—
But now they cringe like stricken beast!
As creeping seas on far-flung shore
The white man drives us from our lands.
Each moon he steals one valley more
And leaves to us these barren sands!

"Our wickiups are ground to dust!
Dry ollas crack for want of drink
And white man rules our hills with lust,
From Tahquitz spring to mountain brink.
Call forth the spirit of your sires!
Give battle as in days of old.
Leap forth like flames from council fires.
Go! bring Ka-wee-yah all their gold!"

Then Chief Ka-wee-yah took his place
Before the ancient battle stone,
And scanned each shadowed staring face
With scornful eyes that gleamed and shone.
His faithful braves crouched mute and still
As tongueless sleeping mountain peak;
Their lips were dumb, like silent hill,
'Till Wa-pee-to arose to speak.

"The deeds of mighty Wa-pee-to
Are painted on the rocky wall.
He kills the wolf and tracks the doe
And knows the lion's and panther's call.
Serenas fear his hungry knife;
The Piutes flee when war-drum beats.
He dares give battle life for life
Against them all—but fierce Tahquitz.

"LONG EARED BRAYING ASSES—"

"Dull broken axe and shriveled tree;
The crumbling gray adobe shack,
Speak words of wisdom now to me,
For braves who left them ne'er came back!
Their bones were chewed like golden grain;
And o'er the hills in crimson sheets
Their blood was spilled as falling rain,
My fathers bid me shun Tahquitz!"

Twelve warriors then arose and gave
The tongue of truth to Wah-pee-to.
They vowed their hearts were strong and brave
But wisdom bade them not to go.
Chief Ka-wee-yah waxed hot with shame;
His soul was filled with black disgrace
And twisting shafts of council flame
Showed swelling passions in his face.

He held aloft the battle stone;
His words were those of warrior bold;
"The great Ka-wee-yah goes alone
To slay Tahquitz and seize the gold!"
Huge ghoulish wings flashed past the moon—
A star shot down in fiery flight—
Strange noises filled the crowding gloom
As Ka-wee-yah strode out of sight.

Through clutching thorn and snarling brush
He neared the canyon's yawning throat,
Then sped along in midnight hush
Like leaping faun or mountain goat.
Dry crackling twig boomed like a gun;
Black darting bats flew past his head.
Each star was huge as harvest moon
And tinged with shades of bloody red.

Ka-wee-yah reached the perching shack;
The wind blew swift and cold.
Fierce devils seemed to shove him back,
As he stooped down to steal the gold.
Wild shrieking moans filled all the air;
The canyon rang with fiendish yell
As Tahquitz seemed to seize white hair
To drag Ka-wee-yah down to hell!

With curdling scream Ka-wee-yah fled!
He seemed to fly on eagle wings,
As screeching demons beat his head
And scorched his feet with blazing things.
Wa-pee-to rules the braves today,
But never tempts the canyon gloom,
And babbling squaws are apt to say
They saw Ka-wee-yah reach the moon!

It's queer how far the strident call
Of long-eared braying asses
Will toss along from wall to wall
Down yawning mountain passes!

MOHAVE TIM

Mohave Tim was a mongrel pup,
With a tail like a dried screw-bean,
His head drooped down, his ears flopped up,
And his legs were bowed and lean.
No artist would ever have painted him
For the rest of the world to see,
For he was gawky stub-nosed Tim,
As homely as dogs can be.

He never raced with the slim kit-fox,
Nor bothered the long-eared Jack;
But slept in the shade of the old feed-box,
Or rummaged about the shack.
He'd trudge along, when I hit the trail
Through the desert's scorching sun,
Wagging his withered stumpy tail
Like life was a barrel of fun.

At night, he would crouch in the desert sand,
With his head on my weary knee;
Looking, with awe in his big brown eyes,
As if he were worshipping me.
He never cared if the grub was low,
Or whether the trail was hard,
Wherever I went, he was eager to go.
Could man choose a finer pard?

One day, I failed to heed the sound
Of a rattler on the trail,
Weaving its head above the ground
And buzzing its vibrant tail.
Like a warrior dashes into his fight,
Mohave sprang at its head.
Well—I camped there, alone, that night.
My pal—Old Tim—was dead.

I buried him in the desert's sand,
My pard and true-blue friend;
Mohave Tim was a mongrel cur,
But he played the game to the end.

ON-E-THE-FA—

ARROW-MAKER OF THE SANDS

Canto I

Summoning Spirits of the Departed

Sun and moon are weeping, weeping,
Through the clouds o'er Eagle Peak;
Kneeling squaws are wailing, wailing,
As the oldest chieftains speak:

"Spirits of the wind and sand-dunes,
You who live beyond the skies,
Haste to chant the tribal death-tunes
E'er an earthly spirit flies.

"On-e-the-fa—smoking chieftain—
Maker of the arrow's head;
On-e-the-fa—arrow-maker—
Calls the spirit of the dead.

"Wise was he in ways of arrows
And the language of the bows;
He who talked the tongue of feathers,
Begs you come before he goes.

"Chieftains of the long-forgotten,
Roaming with the winds and rain,
Guide the soul of On-e-the-fa
To the spirits' high domain."

Canto II

The Death of On-e-the-fa

In his hut lies On-e-the-fa,
Fighting for the breath of life;
Withered like an aged palm tree,
By the desert's heartless strife.

Bending o'er him is his daughter,
Chanting as the mourners sway;
And the crouching squaws and chieftains,
Wail as gourds in cadence play.

Willows strong were bound with raw-hide
By these hands now worn and old;
On-e-the-fa's hut will perish
E'er his burning pyre is cold.

Spirits of the vanished chieftains,
Hover 'round his noble head;
Wailing cries rise higher, higher—
On-e-the-fa—chief—is dead!

Canto III

In the Cry-house

Purple shadows leave the hilltops
To the reign of golden red;
Clouds are weeping in the mountains—
On-e-the-fa—chief—is dead.

In the palm-thatched old ramada,
In the cry-house old and gray,
Lies the sleeping On-e-the-fa,
As dim night melts into day.

Round about the arrow-maker,
He who named yon frowning peak,
Sit the mourning squaws and chieftains
List'ning to the rattles speak.

Swaying, swaying move the mourners
To the death gourd's rhythmic sound;
And the chieftain of the singers
Stamps upon the dusty ground.

Slowly rises old Ka-we-ah
From the dusty cry-house floor;
Mighty hunter of the desert,
Keeper of the tribal lore.

"Many hands have sought the spirit
Which guides arrows in their flight;
Sought for it in dunes and coulees.
Some by day, and some by night.

"Sought the soul of flying feathers
And the heart of singing bows—
Bows as sturdy as the ironwood
Which near Creeping Mountain grows.

"Heard the twisted tongues of willows
And the lying feathers' song;
Plucking rotten twigs of ironwood,
Choosing old and feeble thongs.

"Crawled they like the sluggish lizards,
Lizards blind as shedding snakes;
While the evil spirit voices
Led them through the tangled brakes.

"Only one e'er found the spirit,
Found the bow and arrow's soul;
On-e-the-fa, arrow-maker,
He alone has reached that goal.

"Only he could read the ironwood,
Pick the strongest bow and head;
Soon his soul, like flashing arrows,
Speeds to join the vanished dead."

Then the wailing rose in billows,
Muffled by the gourd's weird sound;
All that day and night, the mourners
Crouched upon the sand-swept ground.

Canto IV

The Release of the Soul

Dawn—and through the waking sand-dunes
Morning steals in spirits gay;
Splashing purple hills and coulees
With her paints of red and gray.

Tints the mountains and the valleys
Till they gleam like heaps of fire;
Paints with gold and blood-red color
On-e-the-fa's waiting pyre.

On the pyre of mesquite fire logs
On-e-the-fa waits the day;
Waits the red-tongues of the fire-pit
Which will loose his soul away.

Laid upon him are the presents,
Gifts of mud and those more rare;
And the favored bow and arrow
Which he used to stay the bear.

Grouped about the waiting fire-pit,
Chieftains chant the soul's last tunes;
And the squaws are wailing, wailing,
As the wind mourns in the dunes.

Bring they now the blazing firebrand
To the noble funeral pyre,
And the eager logs of mesquite
Burst in flames of leaping fire.

Free!—the soul of On-e-the-fa
Soars away in eagle flight,
And the hissing, hissing fire-logs
Flame and dance in wild delight.

On-e-the-fa—arrow-maker—
(Who is there would dare to say)—
On-e-the-fa—chief and warrior—
Has not reached the far-away?

L'ENVOI

In the sand-vase by the mesquite,
Buried they the ashes gray;
And the dug-out by the sand-hill
Has been killed and dragged away.

In the old Adobe's shadow,
When night drives the day away,
There, where On-e-the-fa labored,
Now the lizards dash and play.

Gone is he who ruled the arrows,
He who talked the feather's tongue;
On-e-the-fa, chief, has left us—
On-e-the-fa's song is sung.

GOD'S CRUCIBLE

Wherein the broken hearts
And burdened souls of
Men, by blazing sun and
Driving sands are burnished,
Cleansed and born anew—

THE DESERT.

A PROPHECY

When worlds have worn their lives away
And man has drained their fountains dry;
When mountains change to sand and clay
And seas have ceased to moan and cry,
The desert shall be king once more,
Shall rule again as oft before.
It was the first to breathe and live,
The first to promise and to give,
And it shall reign where seas now lie—
The first to live and last to die.

When life dies in the flower's seed pod
And cities crumble back to dust;
When man has lost his faith in God
And killed his soul with hate and lust,
The desert shall keep faith once more,
Shall hope again as oft before.
It was the first to breathe and live,
The first to promise and to give,
And it shall rule where seas now lie—
The first to live and last to die.

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